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THE FANTASTIC FOUR
WORLD'S GREATEST
PART ONE OF FOUR

BY MARK MILLAR & BRYAN HITCH

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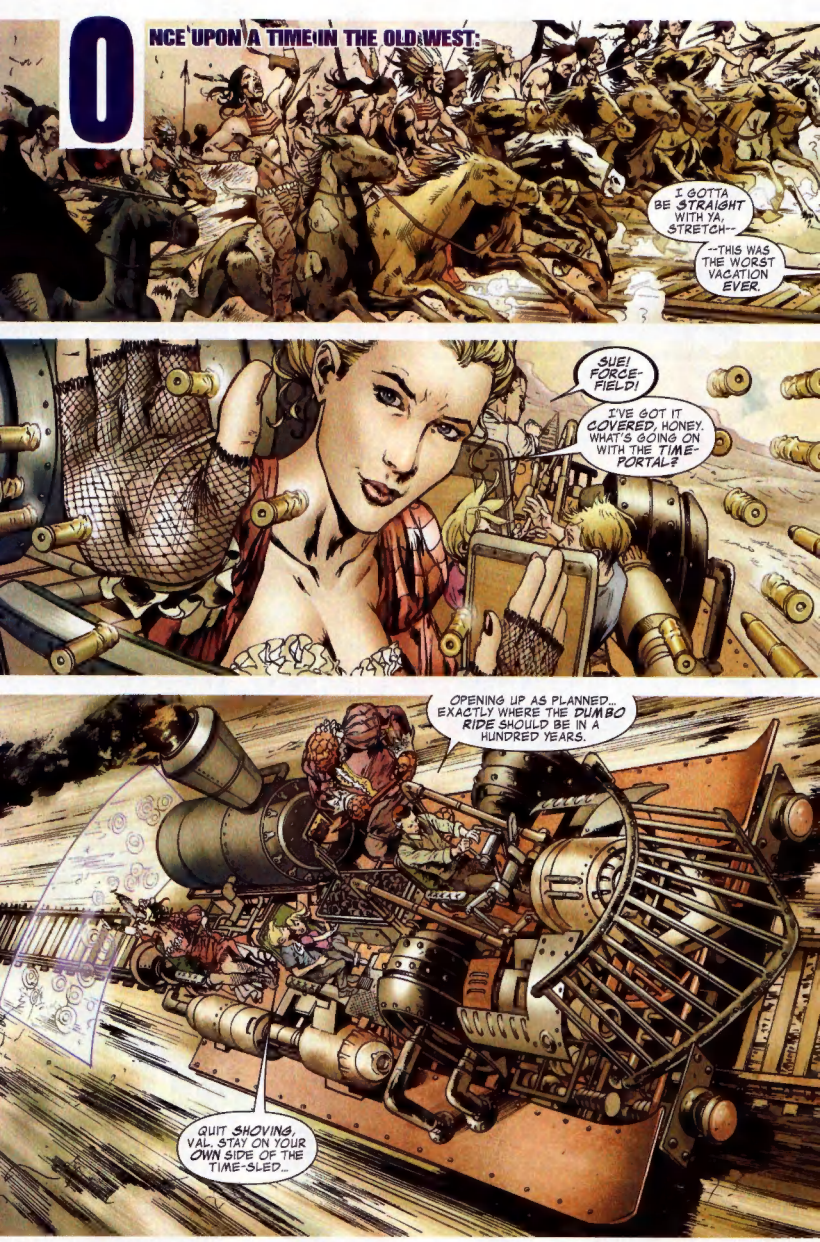
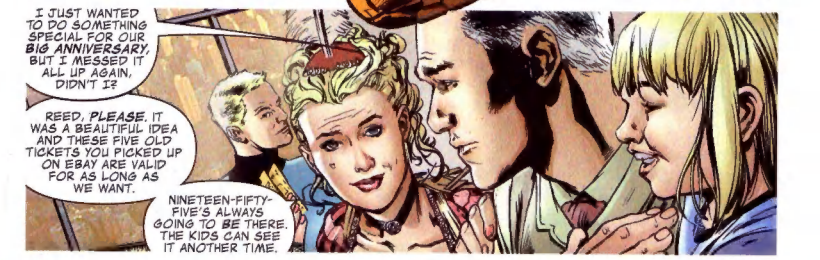

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE OLD WEST:
I GOTTA BE STRAIGHT WITH YA, STRETCH--
--THIS WAS THE WORST VACATION EVER.
SUE! FORCE-FIELD!
I'VE GOT IT COVERED, HONEY. WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE TIME-PORTAL?
OPENING UP AS PLANNED... EXACTLY WHERE THE DUMBO RIDE SHOULD BE IN A HUNDRED YEARS.
QUIT SHOVING, VAL. STAY ON YOUR OWN SIDE OF THE TIME-SLED...

GO BACK IN TIME, HE SAID. IT'LL BE FUN, HE SAID...
REED, WHAT IS THAT THING COMING TOWARDS US?
OH, THAT'S JUST THE MAIL-TRAIN. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. WE'LL MAKE THE TIME-JUMP ALMOST ONE FULL SECOND BEFORE WE HIT IT. I'VE GOT IT ALL WORKED OUT.
HEY, WATCH WHERE YOU'RE--!
WHOA!
FRANKLIN!
RELAX, GUYS. EVERYTHING'S FINE.

THE BAXTER BUILDING, NOW:

AW, CRAP!
DUDE.
SHOULD I EVEN ASK?

DON'T BLAME ME! BRAIN-BOX HERE WUZ THE ONE WHO SCATTERED US ALL ACROSS THE TIME-STREAM WHEN HE WUZ SUPPOSED TA BE TAKIN' US ON OUR BIG FAMILY TRIP!
SO MUCH FOR DISNEYLAND'S GRAND OPENING IN NINETEEN-FIFTY-FIVE, YA BUM!
BEN, SUE, CHILDREN, I AM SO SORRY...BUT THAT TEMPORAL STORM CAME OUT OF NOWHERE.

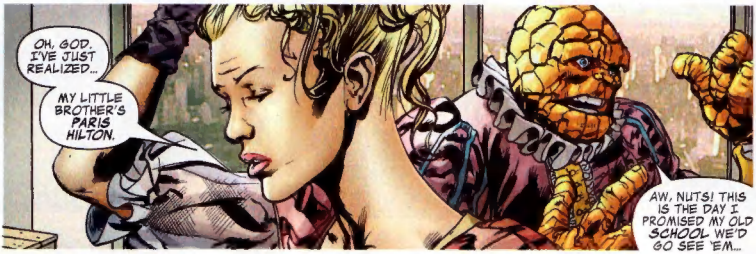

I JUST WANTED TO DO SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR OUR BIG ANNIVERSARY, BUT I MESSED IT ALL UP AGAIN, DIDN'T I?
REED, PLEASE. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL IDEA AND THESE FIVE OLD TICKETS YOU PICKED UP ON EBAY ARE VALID FOR AS LONG AS WE WANT.
NINETEEN-FIFTY-FIVE'S ALWAYS GOING TO BE THERE. THE KIDS CAN SEE IT ANOTHER TIME.

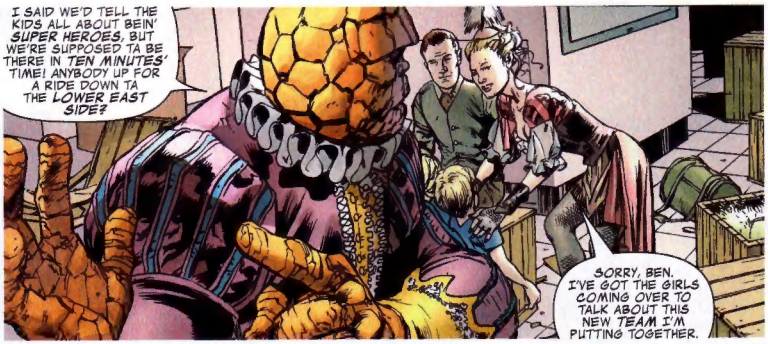
SAY, WHAT'S WITH THE REMOVAL GUYS, JOHNNY-BOY? I THOUGHT YA WASN'T GOIN' OUT WEST TO BE A STUNTMAN NO MORE!
YEAH, WEREN'T YOU STARTING SOME KINDA LADIES' UNDERWEAR COMPANY, UNCLE JOHNNY?
AH, THAT WAS TWO ENTIRE WEEKS AGO, FRANKLIN. I JUST DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO GROW UP AND GET SERIOUS, SO I'M GONNA FORM THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ROCK BAND INSTEAD.

EXCUSE ME?
WELL, WE CAN'T LIVE OFF YOUR COPYRIGHTS FOREVER, REED. NOT WHEN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY COULD MAKE ME A GAZILLION DOLLARS. HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW RICH THESE GUYS ARE?
BUT DON'T ROCK STARS HAVE TO SING OR PLAY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS?

WELL, LOOKIT YOU BEING ALL FUNNY.
I BOUGHT A LOFT OVER BY THE FLATIRON BUILDING AND WE'RE GONNA WIRE THE PLACE UP FOR A REALITY TV SHOW. IT'LL BE AWESOME, SIS. YOU NEED TO COME SEE US.

NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...
...I GOT A MOCHACHINO APPOINTMENT WITH MY MANAGER.


OH, GOD. I'VE JUST REALIZED...
MY LITTLE BROTHER'S PARIS HILTON.
AW, NUTS! THIS IS THE DAY I PROMISED MY OLD SCHOOL WE'D GO SEE 'EM...


I SAID WE'D TELL THE KIDS ALL ABOUT BEIN' SUPER HEROES, BUT WE'RE SUPPOSED TA BE THERE IN TEN MINUTES' TIME! ANYBODY UP FOR A RIDE DOWN TA THE LOWER EAST SIDE?
SORRY, BEN. I'VE GOT THE GIRLS COMING OVER TO TALK ABOUT THIS NEW TEAM I'M PUTTING TOGETHER.

NEW TEAM?
THE MADELINE JOYCE THING. OH, I TOLD YOU ALL ABOUT IT, REED. THE CHARITY WE'RE SETTING UP TO HELP VICTIMS OF SUPERHUMAN INCIDENTS.

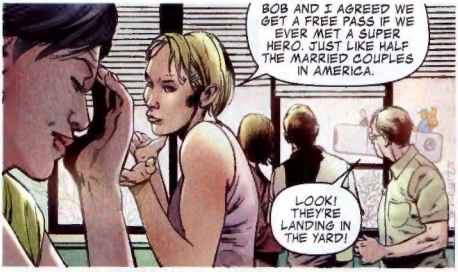
DON'T WORRY. IT DOESN'T AFFECT WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE. NOW C'MON, GUYS. WE NEED TO GET YOU SHOWERED AND DRESSED.
HOW ABOUT YOU, BUD? ANY CHANCE OF DOIN' A SOLID FOR THE GUY YA DISFIGURED IN THAT COSMIC RAY ACCIDENT?

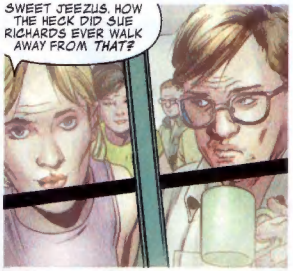
FIRE UP THE FANTASTI-CAR.
AWESOME.

BEN'S OLD SCHOOL:

WHAT ARE YOU GETTING ALL MADE-UP FOR?
BECAUSE THEY'LL BE HERE ANY MINUTE, DEBBIE. DON'T YOU READ THE ENQUIRER? MISTER FANTASTIC'S MARRIAGE HAS BEEN GOING THROUGH ANOTHER ROCKY PATCH.

AND?
WHAT DO YOU THINK, EINSTEIN? HE MAKES A PLEASANT CHANGE FROM EIGHT-YEAR-OLD BOYS!
WHAT ABOUT BOB?
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU? MY RABBI?


BOB AND I AGREED WE GET A FREE PASS IF WE EVER MET A SUPER HERO. JUST LIKE HALF THE MARRIED COUPLES IN AMERICA.
LOOK! THEY'RE LANDING IN THE YARD!


SWEET JEEZUS. HOW THE HECK DID SUE RICHARDS EVER WALK AWAY FROM THAT?

IT'S BEN GRIMM I'M WORRIED ABOUT. DON'T YOU THINK THAT SKIN CONDITION COULD UPSET THE KIDS?
OH, PLEASE! IT'S THE FANTASTIC FOUR! THAT MEANS DOCTOR DOOM JOKES! SOUVENIRS FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE! THE INSIDE SCOOP ON GALACTUS!
THIS IS GONNA [redacted] THE BEST FUN THEY EVER HAD...
TWO HOURS LATER:
OKAY, WE'VE SPENT AN HOUR ON THE PHYSICS OF MY ANTI-GALACTUS SUIT, BUT NOW WE'RE GOING TO LOOK AT THE PRACTICALITIES OF OPERATING SUCH A MACHINE.
I'VE ESTIMATED THE POWER COSTS AT A BILLION DOLLARS A SECOND. BUT SHOULD AMERICA FOOT THIS BILL ALONE, GIVEN THAT GALACTUS WOULD POSE A GLOBAL THREAT?
ETHICALLY, I SUGGEST THE WORLD'S NINE RICHEST NATIONS SPLIT THE COSTS AS FOLLOWS...

AW, FER CRYIN' OUT LOUD--
ANYBODY WANNA PLAY IN THE FANTASTI-CAR?
ME!
ME!
ME!
ME!
ME!
ME!
ME!

YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A WAY WITH KIDS, MISTER GRIMM.

AW, THIS IS NUTHIN', TOOTS. YOU SHOULD SEE THE WAY I MAKE A SPANISH OMELETTE AFTER A NIGHT O' WILD, PASSIONATE LOVIN'.

CUTE LINE. HAS IT EVER ACTUALLY WORKED ON A REAL PERSON?

I'LL TELL YA AT BREAKFAST. NOW HOW'S ABOUT I PICK YA UP AT EIGHT AND WE GO DRINK LOTSA BEER? I KNOW THIS CLASSY LITTLE *IRISH* JOINT THAT'S EVEN GOT A HAND-DRYER IN THE MEN'S ROOM.

HOW COULD ANY GIRL *REFUSE*?

THE BAXTER BUILDING:
COULD I TEMPT YOU WITH A SLICE OF PUMPKIN PIE, MS. VAN DYNE?
GOD, NO. I CAN BARELY FIT INTO MY COSTUME AS IT IS. DO YOU HAVE ANY EGG-PLANT?
WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THE DOOMBOTS, SUE? THEY'RE HILARIOUS.
OH, YOU KNOW WHAT REED'S LIKE, JEN. ALWAYS BUILDING STUFF WHILE WE'RE WATCHING TV. I DON'T EVEN ASK.
IS HE COOL ABOUT THE NEW TEAM? HANK'S REALLY WORRIED THIS MEANS I'M LEAVING THE AVENGERS.
REED WAS THE SAME, BUT I EXPLAINED THIS WAS A WHOLE NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT SUPER-TEAMS. THIS IS A CHARITY, NOT ANOTHER BIG IDEOLOGICAL SPLIT.
BESIDES, YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING IN THE FF: IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD FOR TEN MINUTES AND THEN NOTHING HAPPENS FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS.
I JUST NEED TO FIND MYSELF A GOOD NANNY AND THEN I CAN REALLY GET MY TEETH INTO THIS.
OKAY, I'VE BEEN TALKING TO MISS AMERICA'S ESTATE AND THEY'RE ABSOLUTELY FINE WITH US USING HER NAME ON THE CHARITY'S LOGO.
HER NEPHEW WAS ACTUALLY DELIGHTED SHE'S BEING HONORED LIKE THIS. IT'S AMAZING HOW FEW PEOPLE REALIZE SHE WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST SUPER-HEROINE.
HUH?
EXCUSE THE INTERRUPTION, SUE, BUT I NEED TO FIND REED. HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHERE HE IS?
UH, ANYONE WE SHOULD KNOW?
JANET AND JEN, THIS IS ALYSSA MOY. SHE'S AN OLD FRIEND OF REED'S FROM HIS UNIVERSITY DAYS, THOUGH WE HAVEN'T ACTUALLY SEEN HER IN QUITE SOME TIME. IS THERE A PROBLEM, ALYSSA?
I HATE TO BE CRYPTIC, BUT I'VE ONLY BEEN CLEARED TO DISCUSS THIS WITH REED. AND THE NAME ISN'T MOY ANYMORE. IT'S CASTLE.
I GOT MARRIED TO THE BILLIONAIRE TED CASTLE A LITTLE OVER SIX MONTHS AGO. PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM?
HEARD OF HIM? HE'S ONE OF THE SMARTEST PEOPLE ON THE PLANET, ALYSSA. NICE CATCH.

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL US YOU WERE GETTING MARRIED? WE'D HAVE BOUGHT YOU SOMETHING FUNNY AND IRONIC LIKE A TOASTER OR BATH TOWELS.
OH, WE JUST TIED THE KNOT ON OUR LUNCH BREAK, REED. IT'S ALL WE HAD TIME FOR WITH OUR NINETEEN-HOUR DAYS IN THE LAB.
GOD! TELL ME THESE AREN'T OLD DOOMBOTS YOU'VE CUSTOMIZED. WHAT AN AMAZING IDEA. ARE THESE HERBIE'S SOLAR PANELS ON THE BACK?
I'M AFRAID SO. THE NOTION HIT ME DURING AN AD FOR BIODEGRADABLE WASHING POWDER. I LIKE TO THINK OF IT AS A CROSS BETWEEN RECYCLING AND REHABILITATION.
UH, I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, BUT DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU HAD SOMETHING URGENT TO TELL US?
SORRY. JUST GEEKED OUT FOR A SECOND.
REED, THIS PROJECT WE'RE WORKING ON IS THE BIGGEST THING YOU WILL EVER BE INVOLVED IN, AND WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO HEAR WILL AFFECT THE ENTIRE WORLD.
SUE, YOU HAVE MY WORD YOU'LL HAVE HIM BACK INSIDE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, HONEY?
THIS IS WHAT WE DO, RIGHT? JUST BE CAREFUL.
WELL, SHE'S ABOUT TEN TIMES HOTTER THAN I REMEMBERED...
...IF YA LIKE THAT KINDA THING.

THE EARTH-TRUST, FIFTY MILES FROM THE NORTH POLE:

WELCOME TO PORTAL PRIME, DOCTOR RICHARDS. NATURALLY, ALYSSA'S TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOUR ADVENTURES TOGETHER. I EXPECT LIFE WITH A BUSINESSMAN MUST SEEM A LITTLE BORING BY COMPARISON.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW MANY BORES WITH THEIR OWN ARCTIC BASE, DOCTOR CASTLE. WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT? ALYSSA WOULDN'T SAY.
THAT'S BECAUSE THE EARTH-TRUST IS THE MOST HIGHLY CLASSIFIED ORGANIZATION IN THE WORLD. ONLY FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE EVEN KNOW THAT IT EXISTS, AND IF WORD GOT OUT...
WELL, MASS HYSTERIA WOULD BE OUR BEST-CASE SCENARIO.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF OUR WORK IS AKIN TO A NUCLEAR SHELTER. WHEN THE CALL COMES, WE'LL STEP THROUGH THIS PORTAL FOR A BRAND NEW LIFE.
IT'S UNFINISHED, OF COURSE. BUT WE SHOULD HAVE IT READY IN A MATTER OF WEEKS. WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE ON THE OTHER SIDE IS MAYBE FIFTEEN MONTHS' WORK.
YOU DON'T HAVE EPILEPSY OR ANYTHING, DO YOU?
NO. I'M ABSOLUTELY FINE.
GOOD. BECAUSE THE DIMENSIONAL TRANSFER STILL NEEDS A LITTLE FINE-TUNING...

WELCOME TO NU-WORLD, REED.
THIS IS WHERE WE'RE GOING WHEN THE EARTH DIES.
TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT ISSUE

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